

It's ^{all} ~~None~~ of Your Business

Grantwriting 101: Just The FAQs

Grants can provide a source of revenue for individuals, organizations and associations. A faculty member applies for a university research grant; a collegiate member applies for a travel grant; an independent teacher applies for a professional development grant; a non-profit academy applies for equipment funds; or a state/local affiliate applies for project funding.

Let's get started! Ask yourself these questions...

Am I eligible?

Many foundations will fund only 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations. If you are not a 501(c)(3) organization, you can partner with one who is. The partner serves as your "fiscal agent." Projects might have a natural partner that you already collaborate with anyway. Grants from corporations and arts councils may not have this restriction and may fund individuals and other types of organizations.

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Does my project align with the funder's priorities?

Read carefully the grant guidelines to determine if your project fits with the mission of the funder and the specific grant program. Some funders restrict funds to organizations in a certain geographic area or only fund projects that fill a particular community need. Most of this information can be found online.

Every foundation has a grant officer who can discuss with you whether your organization and project are a good fit for their grant programs. Foundation officers can guide you in determining scope and priorities for your project, and will often suggest an appropriate amount to ask. They do not want you to waste time writing an application that is not a good fit for them (and neither do you!).

What type of grant will I apply for?

There are three basic types of grants:

- **General Operating Support:** Funds that support an organization without specific requirements about how it is spent (although there may be a designated area of impact). Example: funding for an organization that focuses on community outreach programming.
- **Project Support:** Funds that support a specific program or project with requirements about how it is spent. Example: a strings project within an organization's community outreach programming.

- **Capital Support:** Funds to purchase equipment or major capital (depreciable) items. Example: string instruments for usage in community outreach programming.

Not all funders offer all three types of grants. Again, read the guidelines carefully!

What is the scope of my project?

Am I required to provide matching funds? If yes, do I have adequate matching funds? Can in-kind funds be used for the match? In-kind funds are services or products that are provided to the organization without charge, such as pro bono legal work or donated space for a concert.

Can the project be accomplished within the grant's specified timeframe?

Funders expect projects to be completed on time and within a specific timeframe. If awarded, does the timeline for disbursement of grant funds meet my needs? For some grants, it might be a year or more from the due date of the application to when funds are received.

What need or problem does my project address?

Funders want to know the impact of your project. Is there a community need or problem that your project addresses? If yes, then your project becomes an "action item" that fills a

need and results in specific outcomes. The application will likely ask for a projection of expected outcomes. Keep track of these outcomes throughout the project for inclusion in the grant's final report.

What documentation is required?

Do I have everything that is required or will I need to create documentation? Most grants require an IRS determination letter, Board of Directors list and financial statements (some require audited statements). However, some grants may also require video or photographic documentation of the quality of the project, letters of support or other additional documentation.

What financial information is required?

Depending on the type of grant, you will prepare an organizational budget and/or a project budget. The budget should match the narrative—if you mention a marketing plan in your narrative then include marketing funds in the budget. Income should equal expenses—always! Many grants will include a budget explanation section, where you can explain how you calculated the budget numbers.

How do I write the narrative?

Write in a direct, clear, concise manner. Use professional, business-like language. Focus on the basics—who, what, when, where, why, how. If the provided text box is too small, you are not being concise enough. Do not use jargon or acronyms. Assume the reader knows nothing about your organization or project. Answer every question. Answer only the questions that are asked. Most importantly, proof-read! Typos and grammar mistakes do matter. Ask an outsider to read your application.

How will my grant be evaluated?

Understand the criteria that will be used to evaluate the application. Be sure the application provides information that addresses each criteria point.

What are post-award requirements?

Understand what the final grant report will require, including statistics that you might need to collect during the project.

How do I get started?

Pre-Google, I audited an arts administration class and attended workshops provided by funders. Now, there are tons of resources online about how to write grants and find grant opportunities. There are national databases, such as Foundation Directory Online (<http://fconline.foundationcenter.org>). Most useful for me are newsletters from local community foun-

dations and the state arts commission, and new grant alerts from local youth agencies.

Start with what you know. Start with local foundations, where your organization and community are known. Check corporations, arts councils and civic groups. Start with a simple project idea that fills a need. If you can clearly and concisely articulate your project and its impact, then you can add the other requirements—financial information, target audience, marketing needs and the like.

MTNA grants are a great first step. During the past year, an MTNA task force has overhauled and streamlined the grant process, including a simplified application with a 250-word narrative and minimal financial requirements. For collegiate members, the next round of grants is due November 1, 2017. For other members and affiliates, the next round of grants is due May 1, 2018. More information is available at www.mtna.org. ■

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